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ABSTRACT

City Year is a community-service program based in Boston (Massachusetts) that has frequently been praised as a model for other service programs. In City Year, young people of all races and from differing backgrounds work together for 9 months on public service programs ranging from physical labor to tutoring. Volunteers receive a small stipend and a \$5,000 grant toward college or educational expenses at the completion of their service. This is an account of a reporter's experiences as a member and supervisor of a City Year team that started with 12 members. One was murdered early in their service, and his death provides a framework for examining the experiences of other participants. One team member became pregnant, another was jailed, and some did not complete their service. Others, however, finished the 9 months with pride. Projects included renovating a building for the homeless, making a community garden, tutoring school children, and organizing a neighborhood cleanup day. Followups put the experiences of participants and dropouts into perspective. This discussion does not romanticize community service, nor does it exaggerate the contributions it can make, but it does show the benefits participants and the community derived. (Contains a list of seven national and community service opportunities.) (SLD)

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